

THE BIG STICK

REVIEWS

THE SECRET OF EFFICIENCY. By GRACE DAWSON. William Rider & Son.
1s. net.

GRACE DAWSON is a spiritual Grace Darling. Oh the wonderful gospel that she brings to perishing humanity! She has discovered the secret of eternal youth : like most great discoveries, it is a very simple one. "When tired, rest!" This puts Grace Dawson several streets ahead of Madame Curie, and disposes once for all of the assertion that the female brain is inferior to the male. "When tired, rest!" How grand, how simple, how sublime!

When human souls, by passion led,
Are overworked and underfed,
Who tucks them in their little bed?
Grace Dawson.

I yawn, I rub mine eyes, I prop
The weary head that wants to drop—
Who soothes me to a humming-top?
Grace Dawson.

Whose smooth and soporific prose
Lulls me to infinite repose,
Hushes the brain and stirs the nose?
Grace Dawson.

Only one shilling of your hoard!
Even the humblest can afford
The luxury of being bored
By Dawson.

MORPHEUS.

THE INFERNO. By AUGUST STRINDBERG. Translated by CLAUD FIELD.
William Rider & Son.

I HAVE already had to speak to publishers about cheap production. In this case I must protest emphatically against the employment of a translator who makes a solecism nearly every time he touches Paris.

E. g. 'northern railway station' for 'Gare du Nord,' 'Lilas brewery' for 'Closerie des Lilas,' 'St. Martin's Gate' for 'Porte St. Martin,' 'Rue de Fleurs' for 'Rue des Fleurs,' 'racecourse' for some unindicated part of the Jardin du Luxembourg, 'churchyard' of Montparnasse for 'cemetery,'

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'exhibition of independent artists' for 'Salon des Independents,' 'Bullier's dancing saloon' for 'Bal Bullier,' 'Lyons Bank' for 'Crédit Lyonnais,' 'St. Germain des Près' for 'St. Germain des Près,' 'Dr. Popus' for 'Dr. Papus,' 'Rue de Madame' for 'Rue Madame,' and so on.

He puts the same place-name—first in translation, then in French, again and again; and as often as not gets both wrong!

The constant chemical absurdities are perhaps Strindberg's own and may have been made intentionally, as the book portrays the ravings of a melancholic with delusions of persecution.

What sublime and septuple ass calls this Strindberg's autobiography? Strindberg was too lazy to find his incidents in other people's lives; that is all.

And yet we find the translator note at the end: "Strindberg never actually entered the Roman Church"!!!

The book is a perfect clinical picture of a typical case. Chapter I describes the irritability, the fantastic dreams. He imagines himself a great author, a great chemist. He has found carbon in sulphur; he will make gold.

In Chapter II he begins to see omens in simple incidents, receives "warnings" from strangers, finds a plot against him at his hotel, notices remarkable resemblances between his neighbours and some of his "persecutors."

Chapter III develops the persecution-delusions. Roaring in the ears, electric shocks, and other physical symptoms develop. The bedstead has knobs like those of a Leyden jar, the spring mattress suggests induction coils, and so on—to the end!

For refuge he ranges from Papus to Swedenborg, and ultimately, as his mental disease increases on him, he clutches at such straws as Péladan, Annie Besant, and the Church of Rome.

In this dementia the book ends. But Strindberg did not end. He went his cheerful and polygamous way as a free-thinker. Persons who pretend otherwise are liars, probably hired liars—unless, of course, they are Englishmen, who are such natural-born fools in all matters of the soul that they not only require no bribe to lie, but can hardly be paid to see truth.

Until Strindberg's life is utterly dissociated from his art, the latter will not be truly valued.

A. C.

WIND ALONG THE WASTE. By MAUDE ANNESLEY. William Rider & Son.

I CONFESS to having expected a very flatulent novel. Judge of my surprise to find a novel of Paris as it is! The heroine (a rich Englishwoman) is robbed by apaches, and proceeds to paint their leader. She then seduces him, and joins the band.

This is life. Most English and I suppose all American women go to Paris

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in order to fornicate freely with the lower classes. When I was first in Paris for any length of time, the rage was all for professional bicyclists. These pallid heroes, after panting round the vélodrome for God knows how many hours, would fall from their racers into the arms of the stalwart vampires who had annexed them.

The best known of England's "heroic widows" at that time kept a tame but half-witted giant with an enormous black beard; the whole of his body was, I was told, as hirsute as a bear. A daughter of the nobility contented herself with more lyric loves than these. A well-to-do girl from Calcutta practised sheer promiscuity; an exquisitely beautiful woman of the middle classes did worse, and actually married a most hideous dwarf.

To-day things are very much the same.

A very celebrated dancer from America never goes on the stage without previously dragging a stranger—a man from the street, a stage carpenter, it matters nothing—to her dressing-room. One of our best known women art critics haunts the lowest brothels of the Bd. St. Germain in search of adventure; a very distinguished poetess of the nobility supports a burly negro from North Africa and a Belgian boxer; one of our highest artists in music roams Paris every midnight in search of stray milliners' apprentices.

The English and American women in the Café du Dôme solidly, stupidly drunk, dribble curses when their maquereaux "American sculptors" are late; the peace of the Avenue des Champs Elysées is broken by the wild-beast howls of the harlot harridans who, driven from Chicago and Denver by the police, despair of finding such products as prairie air and cow-punching can alone supply.

Who doesn't remember the supper to 100 of her lovers given by an ex-Princess, when, only 89 turning up, she gathered 111 strangers from the street and made out their diplomas while the others waited?

I could say more, much more, indeed, but my only object is to justify the ways of Maude Annesley to the British public.

Her story, moreover, is exceedingly well told, up to the point of the hero's death. The sequel appears to me somewhat an anticlimax, strained, artificial, and boring. (At least I would rather she had carried out the vendetta by killing the son, as her lover had killed the father.)

I suppose it is the publisher again. "Yes, what a nice story! Now if you'll add 40,000 words of dialogue about love and make the story end happily perhaps we might do something."

A publisher offered to take my *Ercildoune* if I'd "pad it to 150,000 words!"

Well, Maude Annesley, ma môme, you're a very lucky child to get your novels published at all in this rotten country, and if the homage and devotion of a colleague who has no such luck can serve you, command it!

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Be wary, though, and never stir a step from your own ground. You have (for the first time in English) got French slang correct ; but you clearly don't know India, and some terrible old bore has planted the worst and feeblest form of a very stale cobra story on your innocence.

There are several mistakes in these few pages—climate and natural history in particular.

Figure to yourself that this bit of the book reads to me almost as *Trilby* reads to you!—

A. C.

THE YELLOW WHAT-HO. A subterfuge in fugues. Not by the Author of *The Blue Grotto*. No publisher. No price. No anything.

KING CROWLEY of Bronchitis-town
To Bernard Smith of great renown
To set his shaven soul at ease
These laryngeal lymphanias.

Where Digitalis roams among
The Endotherms, and on the tongue
Follicular papillæ weave
Their lustral locks, and rosy eve
Sheds her soft toenails as she swings
Her brilliant body into Spring's,
Befell a woe—and here the bard
His sacral plexus with the yard
Planged, and the Ammonites of Song
Blew their shrill spirals loud and long.

On ψ Cassiopeae first
The grave old Hippocampus curst
Black Oxyrrhynchus ! who would dare
To camp in Berenice's Hair
Whose vesper censers amorous
Smoke monocotyledenous,
What time the twisted ibex mars
The parallax of double stars,
And the pale hate of Vega flares,
And swart Typhlitis next unbares
His glaive, ere Granuloma gnashed
His teeth, and on its shoulder gashed
—That shoulder that had shrugged unmoved
Though Os Innominatum loved !

What happened after who can say?
I wandered sadly by the bay,
And saw anemon' streamers wet
Like drawers of scarlet flannelette ;

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I watched the mermaids as they loosed
Their lids on aught might be seduced,
While earnest starfish strove to cram
The strange lore of the pentagram.

In brief, it was a busy morn.
I took the Poet's Club in scorn.
How, with the banded fountain pen
That ran me into one pound ten,
With that too finite reservoir,
How could I sing this abbatoir?
Nay! let me first imbrue mine hands
In the dun blood of Mildred Sandys!
And so on.

A. C.

THE SON OF A SERVANT. By AUGUST STRINDBERG. William Rider & Son.

WHY not "The Soul of a Servant"? The hero is a sort of Scandinavian Neuburg. He is always being "bullied" and treated with "injustice," however kind people are to him. Here are two cases, accurately taken from the book, but rendered in dialogue.

I. In class:

MASTER. What do you know of Gustavus Adolphus?

BOY [*with gloomy pride that he knows all about G. A.*]. R—r—r—gr!

MASTER. Come now, surely you don't mind telling us something about him.

BOY [*stung to madness by this senseless torture*]. I know *all* about Gustavus Adolphus.

MASTER. Well, that's splendid. Let's see now, who was he?

BOY [*beyond himself*]. Tyrant! Monster! Brute! White slaver! Mar—con—ee!

II. In the family circle:

JOHN [*to his brother*]. Now, Albert, I should like *you* to take some flowers to Mother for a present.

ALBERT. All right. [*They enter shop.*]

JOHN. Here's the money.

ALBERT. All right. [*They reach home.*]

JOHN. Now you go in all by yourself and say, "Here are some flowers for you, Mother." I will wait outside.

ALBERT. All right. [*Within.*] Here are some flowers for you, Mother!

MOTHER. Oh, thank you, Albert, how beautiful!

FATHER. Very kindly thought of, my son!

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JOHN. Oh! the black blind hideous horrible injustice of it all! [*With conviction.*] There is no God!

As the book consists of little else but episodes of this kind, it will be seen that the entertained attention of the judicious reader need never flag.

A. C.

THE NEW SOCIAL RELIGION. By HORACE HOLLEY. 6s.

HOLLEY, Holley, Holley, Lord God Almighty!

K. H. A. K.

TO MALISE AND OTHER POEMS. By AELFRIDA TILLYARD. W. Heffer & Sons, Cambridge.

A VOLUME of sonnets, serious and not so serious—the serious portraying spiritual yearning with impelling earnestness and artistic imagery, and brimful of human sentiment. Through these poems runs the palpitating thrill of womanhood in its highest sense, refined, idealistic and restrained, as witness “A Poem to an Unborn Child.” These eighty pages of serious moods have the merit of a lightness and freshness which could never bore, even if one did not agree.

The “not so serious” mood will be welcomed by readers blessed, or cursed, with a strain of gentle flippancy in their blood. It would be a misconception to suggest one of these in particular as being indicative of the author’s personality. That, for instance, beginning “Would that my songs were sausages” is not to be thought of in this connection, so we quote from the standpoint of a critic—cosmopolitan and humanitarian—namely, the “couplets” for unimaginative young men and maidens standing on the threshold of romance, longing, but dumb. Here is a real poet ready to help them in simple yet subtle phrase. What more could one want?

A. C. HOBBS.

OSCAR WILDE AND HIS MOTHER. A MEMOIR BY ANNA, COMTESSE DE BRÉMONT. Everett & Co., Ltd., London.

AS there are thoughts that sometimes lie too deep for tears, so there are books which it would be sacrilege to review. This is one of them. But one may say that in spite of the soul-moving pathos of the subject and the naïve brilliance of treatment, the most interesting aspect of the whole is the wonderful self-revelation of La Bellissima Contessa, as all those who know her call her to distinguish her from other countesses. She is indeed the antithesis of Oscar Wilde—a ‘marvellous masculine soul in the feminine brain building,’ and in this little masterpiece it is the soul which speaks. Aum Mani Padmen Hum.

SUPER SINISTRAM.

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THE OCCULT ARTS: AN EXAMINATION OF THE CLAIMS MADE FOR THE EXISTENCE AND PRACTICE OF SUPERNORMAL POWERS, AND AN ATTEMPTED JUSTIFICATION OF SOME OF THEM BY THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE RESEARCHES OF MODERN SCIENCE. By J. W. FRINGS. Wm. Rider & Son, Ltd., London. 2s. 6*d.* net.

THIS little book is very good, and might have been much better if the author had any knowledge of Science or of the Occult Arts.

A. C.

SCANS FROM ALEISTER CROWLEY'S
THE EQUINOX

More at <https://keepsilence.org/the-equinox>

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